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ABSTRACT

The professional portion of the elementary and early childhood teacher education program at the University of Florida (UF) is taken on a pass-fail basis. A student completing this program has 66 quarter hours of pass-fail credit and a letter written by a faculty member who has worked with her or him for two years. The purpose of this study was to determine the possible effects of 66 quarter hours of pass-fail credit on UF student acceptance into graduate school. Letters requesting information on acceptance policies were sent to every graduate school of education in the southeastern United States. Fifty-five additional letters were sent to selected graduate schools outside this regional area. Replies were classified into the following categories: a) acceptance likely; b) acceptance likely (problems expected); c) possible entry; d) possible entry (conditional status); and e) acceptance unlikely. Survey results indicated that most graduate schools would consider the candidate for admission. However, a student who plans to attend a specific graduate school should check the entrance requirements with that institution. (Author/JS)

A STUDY OF THE ACCEPTANCE TO GRADUATE SCHOOLS OF STUDENTS WITH A PLANNED PROGRAM OF SIXTY-SIX QUARTER HOURS OF PASS-FAIL CREDIT

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ED104891

The professional portion of the teacher education program at the University of Florida for elementary and early childhood teachers is taken on a satisfactory-unsatisfactory basis. A student completing this program has 66 quarter hours of pass-fail credit and a letter written by a faculty member who has worked with him for two years. This letter is based on reports from all of the faculty who have worked with the student. A question often asked by a student is "Will I be able to get into graduate school with all of these pass-fail grades?"

The purpose of this study is to determine what effect, if any, the 66 quarter hours of pass-fail credit will have on the acceptance of a student from the University of Florida into graduate school.

Procedure

The following letter, sent to graduate schools, was addressed to the appropriate person as determined by the graduate school catalog.

Dear

Our program for the preparation of elementary and early childhood teachers is based on Arthur Combs' Professional Education of Teachers: A Perceptual View of Teacher Education. Sixty-six quarter hours credit of the junior and senior years is taken on a pass-fail basis. When a student graduates, a letter evaluating these 66 hours becomes a part of his record. This letter, written by a faculty member who has worked with him for two years and based on reports from all the faculty, includes an evaluative summary of his work, his strong points, his weak points, and our recommendation as to his suitability for graduate study.

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We are interested in finding out how welcome a student from our program would be if he applied to your graduate school in education and what, if any, problems the lack of letter grades for 66 hours would cause.

Would you please supply me with this information. Send replies to:

Dr. Lynn Oberlin
University of Florida
Department of Childhood Education
Box 2571, Norman Hall
Gainesville, Florida 32611

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lynn Oberlin, Director
Childhood Education Program IV

This letter was sent to every graduate school that was known to have a program in education in the Southeastern United States. For this study the following states were considered southeastern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. There were a total of 85 letters sent to graduate schools in the Southeastern United States. A list of the schools is in the appendix of this paper.

Letters were also sent to selected graduate schools outside of Southwestern United States. An attempt was made to include well known graduate schools with high reputations. A total of 55 letters was sent to this group. A list of these schools is in the appendix of this paper.

Replies from the letters were sorted and each placed in one of the following five catagories:

1. Acceptance likely (no problems)
   A. Acceptance likely with 66 hours pass/fail
   B. Pass/fail poses little, if any, problems if other requirements are met.

2. Acceptance likely (may be some problems)
   A. Acceptance with 66 hours pass/fail likely with extra emphasis on standardized test score-GRE, NTE, Miller Analogy Test.
   B. May pose some extra problems.

3. Possible Entry
   A. Problems may exist due to lack of letter grades.
   B. More information about program needed.
   C. Definite answer impossible to give.

4. Possible Entry
   A. Entrance on provisional or conditional status
   B. Ignore pass/fail and use other grades for G.P.A.
   C. Give P (pass) grade equivalent to B or C

5. Acceptance unlikely
   A. Acceptance not probable with 66 hours pass/fail
   B. Lack of letter grades definitely poses problem.

The selection of a category for each letter was done independently by two advanced graduate students. Differences were discussed and an agreement was reached in conference. Later this was reviewed and categories confirmed by the director of this study.

Results

Of the 85 letters sent to graduate schools in Southeastern United States, 60 or 70.6% replied. From the 55 letters sent to graduate schools outside of Southeastern United States 41 or 74.5% replied. These 101 replies were the data used in this study. The graduate schools which replied are marked with an asterisk in the appendix of this paper.

Catagory one responses were characterized as acceptance likely (no problems) and exhibited the following characteristics.

1. Acceptance likely with 66 hours of pass/fail credit.
2. Pass/fail credit poses little, if any, problems if other requirements are met.

Replies from 32 or 53.3% of the 60 graduate schools in the Southeastern United States were in category one. Of the 41 graduate schools outside of Southeastern United States, 13 or 31.7% were in this category. Samples of more of the replies are listed below.

"I see no problem for your students who would be supplying a transcript and letters of recommendation of the kind you describe. We do, however, require that applicants submit scores on the aptitude section of the Graduate Record Examination. Admission is based upon a student's undergraduate record, strong letters of recommendation, a cogent statement of the student's reasons for wanting to undertake graduate study in education, and the scores on the GRE."

"In our opinion there would be no difficulty in accepting a student into our graduate program in terms of the credit/no-credit program that you offer at the University of Florida."

"The Graduate School at . . . . University has a number of criteria which it applies in evaluating an applicant for admission to graduate programs. These vary somewhat with the different departments within the general regulations established by the Graduate Board. Students who attend universities where letter grades which would provide undergraduate grade point averages are not used are in no way handicapped in this evaluation process. The letters referred to in your letter prepared by faculty members would be of assistance, of course, in aiding the evaluation of such an applicant."

"Understanding that the University of . . . requires the Graduate Record Examination Aptitude Test and Advanced Test in Education for graduate admission to study in education, I can assure you that the 66 hours of pass-fail credit would not be a determinant of the applicant's admission. We would base our recommendation for admission on the student's evaluation from the University of Florida, supplemented by his scores on the Graduate Record Examinations."

"I was very interested in your description of the junior and senior years' grading of elementary and early childhood teachers on the pass-fail basis. These students would be welcome at . . . University. The lack of letter grades for 66 hours would cause no problems as long as the letter evaluating them is part of the record. We would be happy to have these individuals in our Graduate School."

"Reference is made to your letter. . . . College would welcome applications to the graduate programs in either elementary education or early childhood education from graduates of the University of Florida who are evaluated under Combs' Model. Congratulations on the implementation on this innovative approach in the assessment of undergraduates preparing for a teaching career."

"So far as I can see, the system you mentioned would have no adverse affect on a student's being accepted. While we traditionally expect a certain grade point average, I see no reason why a P-F transcipt plus an evaluation by a faculty member would not serve as good a purpose or even a better purpose. Our concern is with the student's ability to perform at the graduate level. Anything that could help ascertain that would be acceptable."

"In reply to your letter, I am writing to state that we will admit to our Graduate School any student who receives a favorable recommendation from your faculty as to his suitability for graduate study."

"We very much like your program of evaluating the work of your elementary and early childhood teachers. We shall welcome any of your graduates who wish to enter our graduate program at . . . College. I can see no problems arising from the lack of letter grades for the 66 hours."

"The absence of letter grades for a student during his baccalaureate studies should cause no difficulties in the student's application and acceptance into a graduate program offered by this College. Especially is this true when the student's academic record contains the evaluative summary you mentioned."

Category Two responses were characterized as acceptance likely (may be some problems) and exhibited the following characteristics.

1. Acceptance with 66 hours pass/fail likely with extra emphasis on standardized test scores - GRE, NTE, Miller Analogy Test.

2. May pose some extra problems.

Replies from 11 or 18.3% of the 60 graduate schools in Southeastern United States were in category two. Out of the 41 graduate schools outside of Southeastern United States, 12 or 29.3% were in this category. Samples of some of the replies are listed below.

"From the standpoint of Graduate School policies, we have no regulation that would preclude our considering an applicant who lacked letter grades on 66 hours of work, given the substitute evaluation system that you describe. However, we would undoubtedly weigh the Graduate Record Examination and the National Teacher Examinations more heavily in such a case."

"In response to your letter concerning graduates of the University of Florida program in Elementary and Early Childhood Education, this is to inform you that the letter written by a faculty member evaluating a student's performance is the sixty-six quarter hours of credit in the student's major would be acceptable to us in place of letter grades. We assume that twenty-four quarter hours of credit in the junior-senior years would be graded. In addition we would require that the applicant submit the GRE Aptitude Test scores for the purpose of supplementary evaluation. This statement is consistent with the policy that appears on page 1 of the enclosed Regulations brochure."

"Regarding your letter, we are increasingly faced with college transcripts lacking letter grades and/or rank in class. Obviously the lack of such information increases the reliance we place on other judgements of potential letters, scores, personal statements. I think a single evaluation letter of the sort you propose makes good sense, for the simple reason that it is likely to be read. Many colleges provide, in lieu of letter grades, evaluation letters for each course. This places a tremendous burden on admissions committees to read, and many in fact don't get read."

"If such a student as described in your letter, applied to the Graduate Program in Education at . . ., it would be necessary for greater emphasis to be placed upon such required instruments as the Graduate Record Examination or the National Teacher Examination."

"Admissibility to our graduate programs is based on an applicant's record in three areas: past academic record, professional performance history and standardized test (currently the Miller Analogies Test) scores. Until we had some history of the usefulness of your recommendation letter, greater emphasis would be placed on the other two profile items. But that should present no great problem."

Category Three responses were characterized as Possible Entry and exhibited the following characteristics.

1. Problems may exist due to lack of letter grades.

2. More information about program needed.

3. Definite answer impossible to give.

Four or 6.7% of the 60 graduate school replies from Southeastern United States were in category three. Six or 14.6% of the 41 graduate school replies from outside of the Southeastern United States were also in the category. Samples of some of the replies are listed below.

"We would have considerable difficulty admitting a student without a grade point average as our regulations specify a minimum. It is possible we could substitute GRE scores. The individual evaluation seems to duplicate the required letters of recommendation and would seem to defer our admission decision to your faculty. My own experience with overall evaluations is that they normally are inflated estimates or neglect to mention deficiencies."

"Since we have a University-wide requirement of a 2.6 grade point average for admission to the Graduate School, we will be looking for evidence that an applicant is academically in the upper portion of one's undergraduate class rather than the lower portion. I believe one would be handicapped if this kind of evidence cannot be ascertained."

"This is in reply to your inquiry concerning the acceptability of the graduates of your program for graduate study at our College. The pass-fail transcript that you describe would cause this highly grade-oriented institution some anguish, however, I am equally impressed with its ability to cope with variance. At present we accept students from Antioch who have similar transcripts. In these, as in other cases, admission is by department within the College and each department has its own peculiarities. In any event, admission includes the acceptance of a student by a professor, and a number of our professors have accepted students with most peculiar transcripts."

Category Four responses were characterized as Possible Entry and exhibited the following characteristics.

1. Entrance on provisional or conditional status.

2. Ignore pass/fail and use other grades for G.P.A.

3. Give P (pass) grade equivalent to B or C.

Category Four replies were received from 8 or 13.3% of the 60 graduate schools in Southeastern United States. Five or 12.2% of the 41 graduate schools selected from the rest of the United States were also in Category Four. Portions from some of the replies are listed below.

"Although we too are experimenting with various non-traditional approaches to education, naturally any deviation from the standard procedures do cause us some problems. In the particular case that you mentioned, the only problem that I can see, would be that the student's letter grades would be evaluated and the remaining work would simply count as neutral grades. In other words, a student having a 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale in the courses in which he did receive grades, should not present any problems in acceptance here. The student who had some difficulties in his beginning semester or two, would probably find the neutral grades simply not helpful."

"Enclosed is a general statement that I have prepared about our attitude towards non graded courses. The evaluation system discussed briefly in your letter depends entirely on a written evaluation by a single faculty member. Applicants for our graduate programs in Education are not required to submit GRE scores. It would seem to me that admission of students from your program to our graduate programs in Education would depend heavily on the grades they received in their graded courses and on the ability of the faculty to write a sincere, believable letter of recommendation."

"The basic procedure used in interpreting transcripts with pass/fail grades at this institution has been to consult the catalog of the college or university the student attended for an explanation of the pass-fail grading system. When a clear interpretation is not given, a grade of "C" has been assigned in the evaluation. The catalogs will continue to serve as our major source for interpretation of grades.

The written evaluation system you are using at the University of Florida will provide additional criteria for consideration in the admissions process. We will welcome applications for graduate study from your students, and each applicant will be evaluated individually in terms of the written evaluation on his record."

"I believe that this would pose no great problem for us. We admit some students now with quality point deficiencies where there is merit. When these students have satisfactorily completed 12 graduate hours, we grant regular status to them. So, I believe we could handle the pass-fail records the same way without stigma, for we do not use words like "probation," etc."

Category Five responses were characterized as acceptance unlikely and exhibited the following characteristics.

1. Acceptance not probable with 66 hours pass/fail.

2. Lack of letter grades definitely poses problem.

Replies from 5 or 8.3% of the 60 graduate schools in Southeastern United States were in category five. Five or 12.2% of the 41 graduate schools outside of Southeastern United States were in this category. Selections from some of their replies are listed below.

"For myself, I could not recommend admission to a graduate program on the basis of 66 hours of P/F. A summary letter, written by one faculty member, seems to me an entirely inadequate substitute. Even if the letter is based on the reports of a number of other faculty members, the system rests on the evaluative judgement of one man. This seems a very dubious procedure, not the least for the students involved. We try to allow the departments considerable autonomy here and to be as flexible as possible. However, the general requirement is a B average in the major plus three letters of recommendation. Departments can - - and do - - also require the GRE. Such a "mix" would appear to be a more reliable indicator. My own department requires, in addition, a written paper (a term paper, or the like). Thus, we do not by any means rely on the transcript alone, but it is an important and useful part. This may not be a "popular" opinion today, but there it is."

"With the admissions and candidacy policies as determined by the Graduate Council, I do not see how we could accept students without letter grades for 66 hours."

"At present a student admitted to our graduate education program must have letter grades."

Summary

The results of this study are summarized in tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

Graduate Schools in Southeastern United States

Category	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Number	32	11	4	8	5	60
%	53.3	18.3	6.7	13.3	8.3	100.0*

*Percents may not total 100.0 due to rounding to nearest tenth,

TABLE 2

Selected Graduate Schools from areas of the United States outside of the Southeast.

Category	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Number	13	12	6	5	5	41
%	31.7	29.3	14.6	12.2	12.2	100.0

Categories One and Two are both characterized as acceptance likely and categories three and four as Possible Entry. By combining categories one and two and categories three and four a simplified summary is given in tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3

Graduate schools in Southeastern United States

	Acceptance Likely	Possible Entry	Acceptance Unlikely	Total
Number	43	12	5	60
%	71.7	20.0	8.3	100.0

TABLE 4

Selected Graduate Schools from areas of the United States outside of the Southeast.

	Acceptance Likely	Possible Entry	Acceptance Unlikely	Total
Number	25	11	5	41
%	61.0	26.8	12.2	100.0

Conclusions

On the basis of this study the following conclusions were reached.

1. Qualified students in Elementary and Early Childhood Education at the University of Florida who graduate with 66 quarter hours of pass/fail credit are admissible to most graduate schools. This includes the so called prestige institutions.

2. Students with 66 quarter hours of pass-fail credit could not be admitted to a few graduate schools.

3. Because of the 66 quarter hours of pass/fail credit, some graduate schools would put a greater emphasis on written standardized examinations such as the Graduate Records Examination, Miller Analogies Test, and National Teachers Examination.

4. A student who plans to attend a specific graduate school should check the entrance requirements with that school.

5. An often mentioned concern of graduate schools had to do with the quality and scope of the evaluative letters written for each student. This concern was shared by schools who were highly favorable and highly critical of the program and grading system at the University of Florida.

APPENDIX

Graduate Schools Receiving Letters

Southeastern United States

Alabama
- Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University
- Alabama State University
- Auburn University*
- Florence State College*
- Jacksonville State University*
- Livingston University
- Samford University*
- Troy State University
- Tuskegee Institute
- University of Alabama*
- University of Montevallo*

Florida
- Barry College*
- Florida Atlantic University*
- Florida State University*
- Jacksonville University
- Nova University*
- Rollins College*
- Stetson University*
- University of Miami*
- University of North Florida*
- University of South Florida*
- University of West Florida*

Georgia
- Atlanta University*
- Emory University*
- Georgia Southern College
- Georgia State University*
- Mercer College*
- Savannah State College*
- University of Georgia
- Valdosta State College*
- West Georgia College*

Kentucky
- Eastern Kentucky University
- Georgetown College
- Morehead State University*
- Union College*
- University of Kentucky*
- University of Louisville*
- Western Kentucky University*

Louisiana
- Francis T. Nicholls State University*
- Louisiana State University*
- Louisiana State University at New Orleans*
- Louisiana Technical University*
- McNeese State University
- Northeast Lousiana University
- Northwestern State University*
- Southeastern Louisiana University*
- University of Southwestern Lousiana
- Xavier University*

Mississippi
- Delta State University*
- Jackson State College
- Mississippi College*
- Mississippi State College for Women*
- Mississippi State University*
- University of Mississippi*
- University of Southern Mississippi

North Carolina
- Applalachian State University*
- Duke University
- East Carolina University
- North Carolina Central University*
- North Carolina State University
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro*
- Wake Forest University*
- Western Carolina University*

South Carolina
- Clemson University*
- Furman University
- South Carolina State University
- University of South Carolina*
- Winthrop College*

Tennessee
- East Tennessee State*
- George Peabody College for Teachers
- Memphis State University*
- Middle Tennessee State University*
- Tennessee State University*
- University of Tennessee*

Virginia
- Hampton Institute*
- Lynchburg College*
- Madison College*
- Radford College*

University of Richmond
University of Virginia*
Virginia Commonwealth University*
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Virginia State College*
William and Mary College

*Replies received

APPENDIX

Graduate Schools Receiving Letters

Schools Outside Southeastern United States

Arizona
- Arizona State University
- University of Arizona*

Arkansas
- University of Arkansas*

California
- California State College at Long Beach
- University of California at Berkeley
- University of California at Los Angeles

Colorado
- University of Colorado*

Connecticut
- University of Connecticut*

District of Columbia
- George Washington University*

Delaware
- University of Delaware*

Hawaii
- University of Hawaii*

Illinoiss
- Loyola University of Chicago*
- Northwestern University*
- Southern Illinois University at Carbondate*
- University of Chicago*
- University of Illinois*

Indiana
- Ball State University*
- Indiana University*
- Purdue University*

Iowa
- Iowa State University
- University of Iowa

Kansas
- University of Kansas*

Maryland
- University of Maryland*

Massachusetts
- Boston University

page 2-Schools Outside Southeastern United States

(Massachusetts continued)
Harvard*
Northeastern University*
University of Massachusetts*

Michigan
Michigan State University*
University of Michigan*
Wayne State University*

Minnesota
University of Minnesota

Missouri
University of Missouri at Columbia*

Nebraska
University of New Mexico*

New Mexico
University of New Mexico*

New York
Columbia University
Hunter College*
New York University*
State University of New York at Buffalo*
Syracuse University*

Ohio
Ohio State University*
University of Cincinatti*

Oklahoma
University of Oklahoma*

Oregon
University of Oregon

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania State University*
Temple University*
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh*

Texas
University of Houston*
University of Texas at Austin

Utah
University of Utah*

Washington
University of Washington*
Washington State University*

West Virginia
West Virginia University

Wisconsin
University of Wisconsin at Madison
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee*